

HOW TO HALT PLAGIARISM: AWARENESS, WARNING OR PUNISHMENT!

Habib-ullah Khan

Department of Medicine, Gomal Medical College, D.I.Khan, Pakistan

Literally, plagiarism means “to take and use” the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc of another person as one’s own.¹

Now a days it is a hot topic in the scientific publishing. Plagiarism results in distortion of the scientific record and in biomedical research it may be detrimental for the patients.²

Plagiarism is difficult to detect, especially if it occurs in journals with a small readership. Journals and institutions should take allegations of plagiarism more seriously. Systematic reviews and the use of software designed to detect plagiarism can help to identify cases, but unless perpetrators face greater sanctions the problem is unlikely to go away. To reduce the number of new as well as recurrent plagiarists, journals, institutions, and professional associations need to expose very publicly those found guilty of plagiarism.³

Similarly, digital age has made it easier to enhance the results of scientific studies by images, but “image manipulation” has become part of everyday culture, especially on the internet, and the widespread availability of computer software, such as Photoshop has made it easy to do. The frequency with which we are seeing image manipulation by authors speaks to some misunderstanding of the line between acceptable and unacceptable.⁴

The widespread availability of medical articles on the internet has made plagiarism a common practice among some students. Most plagiarisers are keen to find short cuts—hence the popularity of cutting and pasting text from the internet rather

than laboriously copying from textbooks or articles. This habit, however, makes it easy to identify the cheats and it can simply be detected by using google search engine.⁵

The question is how to discourage or stop plagiarism. There are various means like awareness, warning and punishment. One important factor in its detection is the vigilant eye of the editors of journals. However, the most important and effective mean to discourage plagiarism will be to increase awareness regarding this mean act.

The purpose of this editorial is to increase the knowledge of our worthy readers regarding plagiarism and to spread it out so that those indulged in it can confess themselves or be warned and brought to justice well in time.

REFERENCES

1. Thompson D. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English. 9th Edn. Clarendon Press, Oxford. pp: 1043.
2. Khayat MH, Abdou AE. Letter from the editor. Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal 2007; 13: 748.
3. Chalmers I. Role of systematic reviews in detecting plagiarism: case of Asim Kurjak. BMJ 2006; 333: 594-6.
4. White C. Software makes it easier for journals to spot image manipulation. BMJ 2007; 334: 607. (News).
5. Weeks AD. Detecting plagiarism: Google could be the way forward. BMJ 2006; 333: 706. (Letter) .